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Synopsis

While much has been written and gained critical attention on massive death and violence and destruction of properties occurred during Indian partition in 1947, the novels dealing with Internal Emergency of 1975-1977, the most traumatic period of post-independence history, remain somehow neglected. Though brief, the Emergency is considered as the darkest period in Indian democracy.

Khuswant Singh, the eminent writer who was former supporter of 'Emergency' now claims – 'Emergency has become a synonym for obscenity'. It may be justifiably claimed that after independence, Internal Emergency declared by Indira Gandhi on 25th June 1975 to 21st March 1977, was the only occasion which evoke protests all over India. A large number of books and numerous articles in newspapers and periodicals has been written on it which has taken the form of 'post-emergency' narrative. It provoked quiet a few allegorical novels with occasional dystopic dimensions by some well-known novelists like Salman Rushdie with his internationally acclaimed, *Midnight's Children,* Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* Sashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*, Rohinton Mistry's *'A Fine Balance* and quiet a few lesser known writers like O.V, Vijayan (*The Saga of Dharmapuri*), Raj Gill *(The Torch Bearer),* Ranjit Lal *(The Crow Chronicles*) Nirmal Verma (*The Night Shift Reporter),* Kiran Nagarkar (*Bedtime Story*) a new graphic novel titled *Delhli Calm*, by Vishwajyoti Ghosh which attempts to recapture the days of the 'Turkman Gate' riots and deaths. While some of Emergency Literature has become iconic and intennationally acclaimed, some have become forgotten and some still unpublished.

The novelists has often used allegorical mode and mythical pattern and utopia for satirizing political hypocrisy and the popularist image of the politicians and bureaucrats. The 'Emergency' carries in itself two contradictory images, as rightly put by Rushdie. '…Emergency too had a white part – public visible, documented a matter for historians – and a black part which being secret, macabre, untold, must be a matter of us' (writers and novelists). The atrocities perpetrated in the name of internal security on the Indian mass remained hidden and later get obliterated by the state apparatus through the censorship of press, banning books, imprisonment of the opposition party leaders, academicians, journalists etc and the governmental propaganda of India's rapid development and progression. It was a 'moment' that had been 'diminished, reduced and faded out' of dominant, written national history. As Ashis Nandy recently commented : 'Enormous effort has gone into wiping out the Emergency as a live memory'.

In this thesis my contention would be how fiction can become an effective tool and medium of accumulating an alternative public memories ? Literature becomes more relevant to the political history of nation and civil society when it weaves its plot and touches on the themes that have been of immense national importance, Emergency is such a period which was purposefully obliviated from the public memory and not so adequately represented by mainstream journalism and history. The chief questions I shall try to investigate can be – What fictional strategies have been employed in these novels, to subtly challenge the government version of the event ? How do the novelists expose the essential truth of people's victimization, political malice and torture practiced in the guise of people's upliftment and utter indifference to the intense suffering and their pitiable, helpless condition ? Fictionalization of a period involves certain exaggeration of events, imaginative details, simplification and 'distortions' of the actual facts. As Emma Tarlo cautions the readers of the 'literature of Emergency' not to embrace fiction as reality because the novels represent the state force as 'entirely' absolute and rigid'. Therefore it would be highly contentious whether the representations are authentic, realistic and nuanced rather than a portrayal in black / white, good / bad. But it must be admitted that literature is the readily understood medium for describing how laws operate in a complex society.

Literature based on Indian Emergency is situated against the backdrop of two kinds of narratives. The 'official' Emergency narrative that argues in favour of emergency, takes it as a means towards glorious and prosperous future and as a kind of routine administrative work. Voices of dissent has been ruthlessly suppressed during Emergency. On the other hand the 'Post-Emergency' narrative looks it as a kind of setback, a violence committed to Indian democracy. The history of Independent India can like all history be read as a memory of 'forgetting' or 'remembering'. While certain events in history become significant for the future generations through 'collective symbols', other untoward incident made to be insignificant. The general public are led to forget it by of their absences. Recent trends in historiography teach us to take an interest in such deleted and excluded moments.

In this context I may argue while political versions belies the fact of oppression and horror, fictional truth can provide us to some extent with the actual state of affairs and help to formulate public remembrance of the Emergency. Novelists can in some way provided a reconstructed 'history from below'.

It has now become necessary to give a brief background of the Emergency period. The Emergency challenges the very discourse of democracy after Independence and implicates the state as an agent of violence. It struck at the very core ideals which constitutes Indian democracy. Fundamental rights stood suspended, censorship was imposed on the press, separation of power totally collapsed and prominent political leaders were arrested and tortured in jail. It can be said that it was perhaps the darkest period in the history of independent India. Though some may argue that the emergency was the inevitable outcome of social, economic and political crisis resulting in 'systemetic failure' as stated by P.N Dhar, Secretary to the then Prime Minister and her chief official advisor. Certain events in 1974 and 1975 kept Indira Gandhi's government under immense pressure – a huge railway strike, agitations at many places, the defeat of the congress in Gujrat under Jayprakash Narayan who stood for total revolution, a large scale agitation in Bihar, threat of week-long satyagraha and the devastating court order declaring her election invalid, though on trivial grounds. As Indira Gandhi announced in her first Emergency

broadcast on 26th June 1975 – 'certain persons have gone to the length of inciting our armed forces to mutiny and our police to rebel… How can any government worth its name stand by and allow the country's stability to be imperiled ? The actions of the few are endangering the rights of the vast majority.' Even she assured that 'stringent measures' must be taken to take hold over the chaotic political atmosphere as, 'bitter pills have to be administered to a patient in the interest of his health.' Inspite of her dictatorial nature Indira Gandhi was glorified for her role by M.F Hussain , the painter who justified her actions and helped to build up her personality cult through his paintings. She is being depicted as Sita, Laxmi and as Goddess Durga destroying the forces of evil.

On a conceptual level the ideal of 'constitutional dictatorship' has benevolent objectives – namely that of providing a safeguard against aggression and political instability. But during Emergency, Indian democracy almost turned into a dictatorship – prime minister trying to cling to the power with her sense of indispensability to the nation as phrased in the words 'India is Indira and Indira is India.' Also her son, Sanjoy Gandhi with his programmes of forced vasectomy and clearing of slums almost turned the situation nightmarish. It may be admitted that the Emergency bears a startling similarity with the Orwellian 'newspeak' slogan 'Freedom is Slavery', as she declared she believes in the freedom of the press but 'like all freedom, it has to be exercised with responsibility and restraint.'

The dominant narrative continues to represent the Emergency as a constitutional necessity. It gave the prime-minister authority to deal harshly with the disruptive elements and contribute to the nation's forward march as the propaganda reads – 'EMERGENCY FOR A STRONGER MORE PROSPEROUS FUTURE!'. But the voices of dissent began to be heard. After the general election of 1977 and the defeat of the congress party new counter-narrative started to emerge in the form of prison memoirs, resistance literature, political expose. For example B.N Sinha's *Operation Emergency* which is a 'narrative of terror, oppression and resistance during those dark days', or John O Perry's *Voices of Emergency* which is a collection of resistance poems. Also Sashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* echoes the same sense of liberation after the restoration of democracy in 1977.

Historically, 1977 election which overthrew the Emergency government was projected as a historic victory of the people, almost on par with the attainment of Independence. It would be now relevant to give a brief analysis of some of the novels which captures the anxiety, fear and dark terror of the Emergency days in multiple manner. Rushdie in *Midnight's Children* (1981) uses the style of 'magical realism'.Tharoor's satirical narrative *The Great Indian Novel* is largely confined to the acts of prominent personalities and generalized opinions on the allegorical 'state of seige'. He draws a parallel between twentieth century India and the mythic past of *Mahabharata*. On the other hand, Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (1995) mainly portrays the struggles of ordinary people who are not active participants in the tumultuous politics of the time and hardly comprehend the meaning of all this political decisions.

After the analysis of the novels, we may conclude that the novelists took their inspiration from the western novels on the totalitarian regimes. Few of them had been personally affected by the Emergency. So their approach to it was based on reflection and a kind of cerebration. In my research I would farther investigate on how they recapture the trauma on the Indian psyche,

represents the common man's struggle for survival in this whirlwind, and demolition of the democratic institutions such as press, judiciary, parliament and constitution. Further, the transcendence of the Emergency by the protagonists into something nobler, and higher is central to these fictions.

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